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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands)

later: Mr. RAMOUL (Algeria)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

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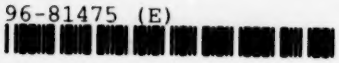

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. AHMED (United Arab Emirates) said that at the present time, when economic security was seen as the basis for stability and development, it was essential for the world community to devise an appropriate strategy, based on cooperation and solidarity in international economic relations, which took into account the changing circumstances of each region, as well as national and regional priorities and the individual characteristics of States. As one of the instruments of international cooperation for development, the Committee must concentrate on establishing clear and more effective means of addressing the economic and social dimensions of development.

2. While many of the political and ideological barriers to the establishment of a world economy based on equality between States and a free market had disappeared, the developing countries continued to be faced with major problems of poverty, illiteracy, violence, crime and drugs. These needed to be addressed at the international level through policies designed inter alia to alleviate the burden of debt and of debt servicing, increase the volume of development assistance, promote the transfer of technology and enable developing countries to export their goods to the industrialized countries without being constrained by protectionist measures.

3. Many existing problems were likely to worsen as world population was expected to double during the first half of the twenty-first century. For that reason, the recommendations adopted at the various conferences convened by the United Nations during the past five years should be promptly implemented.

4. Cooperation was essential if the international community was to establish a fair trading system in which States competed on an equal footing in open markets, which did not marginalize the developing countries. In order to be a part of that process, his country had participated in setting up the World Trade Organization. In the same context, it had promoted the objectives of international cooperation by providing development aid to many developing countries in order to enable them to implement economic and social development projects.

5. His country believed in cooperation and regional integration as an essential step towards the creation of an integrated world economic system, and had taken a leading role in regional and international social and economic activities. It had affirmed the importance of collective efforts to reform the economic, investment and development sectors. That could not, however, be achieved under the shadow of Israel's despotic practices which were having serious economic and social repercussions on the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territories that had been occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and on the Arab population of the Syrian Golan and occupied southern Lebanon.

6. It was time the international community compelled Israel to give up ts expansionist plans and fulfil its obligations under the relevant international resolutions and under the peace agreements it had concluded, thereby making a

reality of economic and social development, peace and security throughout the region.

7. Development and reform of the United Nations system as the main forum for the promotion of economic and development-related cooperation, was a major concern and Member States had recently held detailed discussions on ways of increasing the Organization's efficiency and enhancing its role in addressing current problems and meeting future challenges.

8. Mr. OUANE (Mali) said that while global economic performance in 1996 had been generally positive, many countries continued to be faced with difficult economic conditions, negative growth, declining development resources and a growing external debt. In spite of the recommendations made at the World Summit for Social Development, which made poverty alleviation the central concern of Governments and international and non-governmental organizations, the number of people living in absolute poverty continued to grow.

9. The globalization and liberalization of the world economy should help strengthen international cooperation and solidarity in the solution of major social and economic concerns. In an increasingly interdependent world, the products of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, should have access to the developing countries' markets without the impediments of tariff and non-tariff barriers. From that point of view, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 were appropriate forums for the consideration of developing countries' concerns in the area of international commerce. Moreover, the provisions of the Uruguay Round agreements that were unfavourable to the economies of developing countries should be reviewed. The forthcoming WTO ministerial conference, to be held in Singapore in December 1996, should consider the specific problems of developing countries in the context of the globalization of trade.

10. His delegation commended the efforts that had been made by creditors to cancel or alleviate the external debt of indebted countries, particularly the least developed countries. Those efforts should be pursued with a view to finding a just and durable solution to that problem. Measures should also be taken to alleviate multilateral debt, which was the principal component of the debt of the least developed countries.

11. On the question of official development assistance (ODA), he said that, as of June 1996, ODA had fallen 9 per cent in real terms as compared with its level in 1994. That trend should be reversed. The developed countries should strive to achieve the goal of contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) to ODA by the year 2000, as well as the goal of contributing 0.15 per cent of their GNP to the least developed countries.

12. The mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s had concluded that, although the African countries had made enormous efforts to carry out needed political and economic reforms, the level of support provided by the international community had remained below what was needed in order to honour the commitments it had assumed with respect to Africa. His delegation therefore urged its development partners to provide African

countries with substantial support, which would enable them to meet the many challenges that they faced.

13. The United Nations could and should improve its performance in the field of development, but in order to mobilize the human, financial and technical resources for development, it required the support of all Member States. The Organization's financial crisis had prompted doubts about its capacity to meet the challenges of development. The Organization's ability to achieve its objectives in the fields of development and international cooperation should be of major concern to the international community since it had a direct bearing on the future of that community.

14. Mr. EBOUMY (Gabon) said that according to a number of reports, economic growth in developing countries in 1996 was higher than had been projected. In 1995, even Africa had registered a growth of 3 per cent as compared with 0.7 per cent during the period 1991-1994. It should be remembered, however, that the eight developing countries that had registered significant growth were those that, from 1990 to 1993, had received two thirds of all private capital flows. Most developing countries, particularly the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, had attracted only very meagre flows of resources, in spite of the opportunities offered by the devaluation of the CFA franc and the liberalization of trade. Moreover, the apparent favourable trend in developing countries was due to the combined effect of stable growth in developed countries, and low inflation and real interest rates at the global level.

15. The gap between rich and poor countries and the continuing disparities between developing countries, were sources of major concern. That concern became even more pressing in the light of the globalization of the world economy and the liberalization of trade for, due to the instability of commodity prices and also to restrictive trade practices, many developing countries were prevented from participating fully in international trade and were in danger of being marginalized.

16. In order to ensure that the majority of developing countries were not excluded from the global economy, the international community should concentrate its efforts on providing steady financial support and technical assistance with a view to fostering economic cooperation and regional integration. South-South cooperation was becoming an important means for development, and African countries that had the human and financial capacity and whose administrative and legal structures were better developed should serve as focal points for popularizing that form of cooperation in Africa.

17. The positive growth of African economies was in part the result of courageous reforms. The international community had, however, provided little support. Official development assistance, which was practically the only source of external financing and was a major element in the budgets of certain States, particularly African States, was at its lowest level. Moreover, owing to their insolvency and difficult access to international financial markets, those countries ran the greatest risk of being marginalized. Donors, including multilateral institutions and investors, should be more sensitive to the significant progress that developing countries had made and should meet their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their GNP to ODA.

18. His delegation welcomed the vigorous support of the Group of Seven for the joint initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that defined a framework of action for resolving the debt problem. While encouraging creditors and debtors to find a satisfactory solution to the continuing debt crisis, his delegation rejected attempts to divide developing countries into different categories, since that made some countries ineligible for many forms of development assistance.

19. The United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should coordinate its efforts to ensure the successful implementation of such programmes and plans of action as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. There should be closer ties between bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other development agencies. Improved coordination would help avoid duplication and overlapping. Since programme follow-up was also linked to available resources, it was important to strengthen the political will to increase the level of the Organization's financial resources. In that regard, the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa provided an appropriate framework for mobilizing the international community.

20. In 1997, the General Assembly would hold a comprehensive review of the implementation of Agenda 21. In that regard, his delegation noted that commitments with regard to the financing of Agenda 21 and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies had not been met. Without new and additional financial resources, the environment would continue to deteriorate rapidly and, perhaps, irreversibly. Member States must respect their commitments and strengthen their solidarity in order to create a better world for future generations.

21. Mr. ENG (Singapore) said that it should not be assumed that the United Nations would necessarily play a role in the new global economy unless everyone seriously confronted the implications of that irreversible development. While formerly closed socialist economies were opening up and a number of developing countries - particularly in Asia - had become part of the international economy and were enjoying rapid growth, some voices in Europe and North America had chosen to blame their problems on developing countries, especially Asian exports and the diversion of domestic capital to developing countries.

22. It was usually argued that cheap imports from low-wage but high-growth developing economies in Asia and elsewhere had led to unemployment in Europe and North America. Some attributed the competitiveness of exports from developing countries to the exploitation of labour or to environmental practices that would not be tolerated in the West. Those arguments were simplistic and incorrect. Unemployment in Europe and North America was primarily the result of irreversible technological changes in production structures and labour markets, which had caused demand for less skilled European and American workers in a wide range of industries to dwindle. In fact, exports from developing countries in Asia constituted less than 4 per cent of the total consumption of manufactured goods in the European Union and the United States of America. Clearly, the impact of Asian exports on the economies of the United States and the European Union had been grossly overstated.

23. The diversion of capital from developed to developing countries had also been exaggerated. For example, more than 50 per cent of United States foreign direct investment in 1995 had been for Europe, and less than 18 per cent for Asia. Moreover, the United States was the world's largest recipient of foreign direct investment.

24. The solution to the problems of the mature economies of Europe and North America was to upgrade their unskilled labour in order to adapt to inevitable technological changes. The fact that that had not been done had more to do with the political, social and cultural rigidities of their societies than with international trade.

25. The United Nations system would be marginalized if it allowed itself to become an instrument of the disguised protectionism of some developed countries that were unwilling or unable to adapt to the new global economy. It was important to bear in mind that working conditions, workers' rights, human rights, wage levels and environmental protection could not be considered in isolation from the general living standards in developing countries. The way to deal with those problems was simply to help developing countries develop. As incomes rose, working conditions, wages and environmental protection would naturally improve. The use of the United Nations and its agencies to impose Western labour, environmental and other standards in the name of allegedly universal ideals would only degrade the United Nations.

26. Recent developments in the United Nations had been disturbing. What the least developed countries urgently needed was practical help to build institutions and formulate policies that would enable them to become part of the global economy. They certainly did not need sermons about the relationship between democracy, human rights and development, or theological debates about sustainable development. Unfortunately, such intellectual sophistry had characterized much of the recent discussions on an agenda for development. The United Nations must find a way to help the least developed countries without intruding too brashly into their domestic affairs or imposing any political ideology on them.

27. His delegation welcomed the offers from Japan and Korea of concrete assistance in the context of South-South cooperation. For a number of years, Singapore had been providing technical assistance in resource development to many developing countries under the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Under that Programme, Singapore had established third-country training programmes to provide joint training to developing countries with Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Australia, Canada and Norway, as well as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. It was also working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide technical assistance to developing countries.

28. With regard to the forthcoming WTO ministerial conference, he stressed that full implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements was essential to maintain the credibility of both the World Trade Organization and the multilateral trading system. Developing countries had a strong interest in the review of the implementation of the Uruguay Round since several areas of market access which were of critical importance to developing countries had not been satisfactorily

fulfilled by the developed countries. Developing countries faced real difficulties in implementation and were in need of technical assistance. There were also several outstanding negotiations in different areas that would also be of interest to them.

29. If the momentum of trade liberalizations begun by the Uruguay Round was to be sustained the ministerial conference could not ignore the future work programme of WTO. While the built-in agenda of the Uruguay Round agreements constituted the main framework for that future work programme, proposals had been made to incorporate "new issues" on the trade agenda. Those included investment, competition policy, labour standards and corruption. The ministerial conference would have to decide what to do with those issues.

30. Singapore respected and understood the concerns of other developing countries and the importance of taking into account the different stages of economic development of WTO members. As the host country and as a member of the Group of 77, Singapore hoped that the ministerial conference would achieve a truly balanced outcome. To that end, it had suggested three criteria for the inclusion of new issues: (i) the issue must be trade-related; (ii) the issue must be sufficiently mature to be addressed in WTO; and (iii) WTO must be the appropriate forum for the discussion of the issue.

31. Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua) said that his delegation favoured action to strengthen South-South cooperation, such as the conference on trade, investment and finance to be held in Costa Rica in 1997.

32. Economic and social development must be accorded the highest priority by the United Nations, and his delegation hoped that the outcome of the work on the agenda for development, with the participation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the regional commissions, would advance that objective. It was imperative, in the context of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields, to bear in mind that indiscriminate reductions in economic and social programmes would seriously undermine the progress achieved by the developing countries. One of the primary objectives of the restructuring exercise was to improve the quality of life of individuals, in particular, of marginalized populations.

33. While the developing countries bore the primary responsibility for their own development, development was a shared responsibility, and it was to be hoped that the commitment to assign 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance and the commitments adopted in Agenda 21 would be honoured. A reduction in development aid would have a negative impact on progress achieved with respect to development, peace, democracy and governance. His delegation looked forward to the assessments to be made at the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 and to the reports on progress made in the implementation of the agreements on social development, population, housing and the role of women in development.

34. He expressed his Government's gratitude to the international community for its assistance with the consolidation of democracy in his country, which

inevitably was linked to the consolidation of economic and social development. Sustained international cooperation was essential in the interest of insuring the irreversibility of the transition to peace and democracy. Countries ravaged by war and conflict required economic development programmes which provided former combatants, refugees, displaced persons and all those involved in the conflicts with opportunities to become integrated in civil society.

35. The globalization of the world economy required the sharing of responsibilities and demanded fair and transparent trading practices. His delegation welcomed the recent initiative of the Bretton Woods institutions and the Paris Club to reduce the crushing burden of debt facing the highly indebted countries.

36. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) emphasized that an integrated approach to the eradication of poverty must underlie all activities aimed at achieving sustainable development.

37. One consequence of globalization and the liberalization of the world economy was the marginalization of the economies of developing countries, in particular, the least developed among them, which included his own. Macroeconomic analyses therefore should focus not only on the role of the public and private sectors, but also on the contribution of the informal sector to the development of countries with weak economies, in particular, the African countries. The existence of a distinct, strong and dynamic informal sector - which must not be absorbed by the structures of a modern economy - would substantially facilitate the efforts of African countries to eradicate poverty, promote productive employment and enhance social integration. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, his Government had adopted measures which would provide workers in the informal sector with access to credit and other resources.

38. His delegation hoped that the World Food Summit would adopt measures to enhance agricultural production in the developing countries, particularly in Africa. Mechanization alone was not an ideal solution, and new means of production tailored to the needs of the countries concerned should be devised, with a view to combating desertification and paving the way for sustainable food security.

39. The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly must focus on more than just a few of the 40 chapters of Agenda 21. The Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development should ensure that the reports called for in General Assembly resolution 50/113 covered successes and failures in the implementation of the entire Agenda. After completing its overall review, the General Assembly would have the task of determining which chapters should be given priority in each of the five years leading up to the final review of Agenda 21 in the year 2002. Given the tasks facing the special session, it should be extended to 10 working days; the benefits of doing so would outweigh the additional cost.

40. In conclusion, he underscored the importance of genuine political commitment at all levels, objective analysis and decision-making, the effective implementation of jointly agreed priorities, unswerving adherence to the

principle of shared responsibility while respecting differences and fulfilment of the moral obligation to help the poorest members of society.

41. Mr. MANOR (Israel) said that hunger and malnutrition, poverty and economic deprivation constituted a potential threat to the security of nations, regions and the global community; moreover some solutions and practices had led to harmful and irreversible consequences to the environment. His Government looked forward to productive deliberations and concrete results from United Nations efforts to deal with those issues.

42. One of the primary objectives of the United Nations must continue to be the enhancement of international cooperation for development. The agenda for development provided a proper framework for further discussions on the related issues of the economy, the environment, justice, democracy and peace. Additional financial resources alone would not bring about real development. Countries must depend on the availability of human resources, skills development, training and transfer of technology; the local private sector and the international business community should be involved, for economic growth was a precondition for sustainable development.

43. Development assistance would bring about long-term improvement in the economic and social conditions of the developing countries only if, in addition to being financially and economically viable, development projects were truly sustainable at all stages. Central and local governments and public and private enterprises must be committed to sustainable development, and investment by the international business community in development projects must be encouraged.

44. Technology was the key to real economic independence, and special efforts should be directed at increasing technical cooperation between developed and developing nations. In an era of revolutionary technological advances, human resource development was critical. His country's development assistance programme was heavily engaged in planning and carrying out technical cooperation programmes. His country had considerable experience with its own agricultural and rural development and its international development programmes in increasing and improving food production, and it looked forward to contributing to the work of the General Assembly at its special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. It had developed expertise in many areas related to desertification and was establishing an international centre to develop and distribute scientific knowledge aimed at halting and preventing desertification, in keeping with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa.

45. His country's international development programmes had trained 60,000 persons in over 120 countries, and its development cooperation with various countries in the Middle East had become one of the main foundations of the peace process in that region. Regional cooperation was essential for economic progress, and peace would contribute to the region's prosperity just as economic stability and growth would contribute to peace. His delegation hoped that the positive developments in the region would enable the Committee to focus on the important economic and development issues confronting developing nations and avoid political issues extraneous to its work.

46. Mr. RI Gwang Ram (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the widening gap between rich and poor countries posed a grave threat to international peace and security and to the survival of mankind.

47. Every country should formulate development policies which took into account its own circumstances. No single formula for development was appropriate for all countries and none should be imposed on any country or set forth as a precondition for assistance.

48. Given the increasing interdependence of the world economy, unfair international economic trading practices jeopardized not only the development efforts of developing countries but also the sustainable development of developed countries. The developing countries' request that developed nations should refrain from protectionism, waive and reduce the foreign debt of developing countries and increase official development assistance was therefore entirely appropriate.

49. The organizations and agencies of the United Nations system concerned with economic and social issues should be strengthened in a manner which contributed substantially to the development of the developing countries. Donor countries should dramatically increase their contributions so as to enable the United Nations to carry out its economic and social development activities. His delegation hoped that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development would reach an early agreement on matters relating to official development assistance, foreign debt and the reform of the economic and social organs of the United Nations.

50. Regional economic cooperation played an important role in promoting international cooperation for development. The Tumen River Area Development Programme established by his Government had created a climate conducive to foreign investment and would tap the abundant human and material resources of east Asia. His country would further expand its economic cooperation with all countries of the world which were inspired by the ideals of independence, peace and friendship.

51. Mr. Ramoul (Algeria), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

52. Mr. DZUNDEV (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a successful international policy should seek to fight protectionism, strengthen regional economic integration, create infrastructures which would favour development of all regions of the world, create a favourable international environment in order to strengthen the competitiveness of each economy in the regional and world markets, resolve such problems as the debt burden and market access, increase foreign investments in countries in transition and developing countries and protect the environment. Indeed, as underscored by the results of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, there was no alternative to strengthening international economic cooperation.

53. His country's economic policy was geared towards the establishment of a sound economy which would enable it to become a suitable and credible partner of the European Union. In that connection, his Government had signed a trade and

development agreement with the European Union. Furthermore, free-trade agreements had been concluded with several neighbouring countries.

54. His country's economy had suffered considerably from the United Nations sanctions against the former Yugoslavia as well as from the Greek embargo against it. However, economic cooperation with Greece was growing rapidly. He was confident that the positive trend would continue. Because of the heavy dependence of his country's economy on the external situation, it strongly supported the globalization of the world economy and the liberalization of international trade, which it hoped would be beneficial for every economy.

55. The international community should give priority to the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and of the ninth session of UNCTAD.

56. Mr. U ZAN WYNN (Myanmar) said that although globalization had provided new opportunities for growth in many countries, it had also resulted in further marginalization of others. Developing countries acknowledged responsibility for their own development, but they required an international economic environment that was supportive of their efforts. The international community, particularly the developed countries of the North, had an obligation to help create a more equitable economic environment through measures to eradicate poverty. A durable and comprehensive solution to the debt problem was also urgently needed, and the recent agreement of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the seven major industrialized countries in that regard was a positive contribution.

57. It was deeply regrettable that, 20 years after its adoption, the commitment to devote 0.7 per cent of GNP of developed countries to official development assistance and related commitments concerning the least developed countries, remained unfulfilled. Developing countries required funds in order to develop infrastructure, in their efforts to establish a sound macroeconomic programme.

58. The forthcoming ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization presented an opportunity to review the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements, in particular to ensure that trade liberalization did not lead to further marginalization of the least developed countries. Attempts to introduce new issues on the trade agenda, such as investment, labour standards and corruption, should be rejected. Protectionism in the guise of politically motivated conditionalities could not be accepted. The promulgation by some countries of domestic legislation with extraterritorial implications interfered with the legitimate rights of other sovereign States. In an age of liberalization and interdependence, no Member State, however powerful, had any right to impose its will on another.

59. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) said that optimistic projections of the rate of economic growth in the developing countries must be tempered by two facts: the growth in per capita GDP in those countries had been small, and in most regions the average per capita GDP in real terms still remained below the level of 1980. Furthermore, although the value of trade had continued to expand faster than output for the sixth consecutive year, and trade among the developing countries had grown much more rapidly than in the developed world, it was not yet known

whether the growth in global trade could be sustained and whether a larger number of countries would be able to benefit from increased trade opportunities.

60. He noted with concern the emergence of new forms of protectionism, and pointed out that impeding the exports of developing countries would be counterproductive, because it would decrease their ability to address environmental and labour issues. His delegation was frustrated by the slow pace of negotiations on the agenda for development. Their successful and satisfactory conclusion would be in the interest of all.

61. It was unfortunate that the United Nations continued to be marginalized in the economic field, and that the General Assembly was unable to play a meaningful role in international economic policy. In reality, bodies such as the Group of Seven and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Bretton Woods institutions had taken the lead in that area. The role of the United Nations in development assistance was also being eroded through progressive downsizing of the development machinery and conditionalities. His delegation, however, believed that the Organization remained an irreplaceable forum for breaking fresh ground on intractable issues and for building consensus on measures to promote development.

62. The reason the goal of universal peace had not been realized was because the international community had been unable to generate sufficient political will to eliminate the inequities in the global economic environment. There was no lack of guidelines and programmes for approaching those socio-economic problems; all that was needed was concrete action.

63. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) said that the satisfactory rate of economic growth for the developing countries as a whole tended to mask wide disparities between countries and regions. The situation in Africa was of particular concern because the population there was growing at the rate of 3 per cent per year. Half of the population of Africa was illiterate; two thirds did not have access to safe drinking water. Moreover, it was estimated that sub-Saharan Africa would lose close to $2.2 billion in the short and medium term because of a loss in competitiveness following the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. His delegation was certain that, if the objectives of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Special Initiative on Africa were pursued vigorously and the financial resources needed for their implementation were made available, Africa would be able to extricate itself from the difficult economic and social situation that had prevailed since the 1980s. His delegation welcomed the decision by the major industrialized countries to finance external debt reduction in heavily indebted countries and hoped that African countries would be among the first to benefit.

64. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round had been welcomed by all countries, but it was regrettable that protectionist tendencies were re-emerging in new forms, through national labour and environmental standards that some countries were seeking to impose in order to keep particular products out of their markets. The forthcoming Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization should focus on reviewing the implementation of the commitments contained in the Marrakesh agreements particularly those relating to measures to assist the least developed countries and net food-importing countries. It must not turn into an

arena for protectionist forces to undermine the liberalization measures agreed at Marrakesh.

65. During the cold war, official development assistance had been used as a weapon in the East-West confrontation. In the current political environment, however, Governments appeared to be having difficulty explaining to their citizens why they needed to continue such assistance. In its Human Development Report, the United Nations Development Programme estimated that, of the 10,000 different cultures existing in the world, most were threatened with marginalization or disappearance. He hoped that the countries with the greatest impact on the world economy would realize that cultural diversity was as important as biological diversity.

66. The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly would be a great success if it was able to resolve the problems relating to transfer of technology and financial resources. His delegation welcomed the entry into force of the United Nations International Convention to Combat Desertification and hoped that it would receive the necessary institutional and financial resources.

67. The financial crisis faced by the United Nations and the decline in official development assistance were threatening multilateralism and international cooperation, even though everyone agreed that collective and concerted action was essential in order to meet the challenges facing the world. His delegation was particularly concerned by attempts to impose unilateral reforms on the United Nations by withholding contributions; such contributions which should be paid in full, on time and unconditionally.

68. Mr. DISEKO (South Africa) said that in the face of significant trends in the globalization of production and liberalization of trade, the international community must ensure that the least developed countries were not marginalized. South Africa was heartened by efforts towards reform and recovery, not only in its subregion but in other parts of Africa as well. Through close cooperation within the framework of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the region was making innovative strides towards its vision of the highest possible degree of economic integration through economic cooperation, mutual assistance and partnership for development. The region's economic integration, it was hoped, would empower it to play a significant role in the world economy and global integration. He urged the international community to revisit outstanding issues of an agenda for development, engage in constructive negotiations thereon, and provide necessary resources for the implementation of the Special Initiative on Africa.

69. South-South cooperation - while not a substitute for the North-South partnership - should be strengthened as part of an overall strategy for global economic development. In that regard, South Africa welcomed the convening, in January 1997, of the South-South conference on trade, investment and finance by Costa Rica, as a continuation of efforts to strengthen such collaboration.

70. The special session of the General Assembly in 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21 should help to define an action-oriented strategy for sustainable development. In that regard, the role of the Commission on

Sustainable Development should be strengthened in order to focus increasing attention on the effective coordination of sustainable development activities within the United Nations system. Due attention should be given to elements of Agenda 21 that had not been adequately explored in the past, including the relationship between trade and the environment. South Africa believed that developing countries should not be further disadvantaged by an international trading system which adversely affected cooperation in the area of development and the environment. In view of his Government's commitment to implementing strategies to eradicate poverty, and its belief that it was imperative for the objectives of poverty eradication and the attainment of global food security to remain among the highest priorities of the United Nations, it welcomed, and fully supported, the convening of the World Food Summit.

71. The continued support of initiatives at the national and international level to implement the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), including the strengthening of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, should receive priority attention.

72. Mr. AGEYEV (Kazakstan) said that rapid economic growth and increasing interdependence were the outstanding characteristics of the current era. The information revolution had laid the foundation for new types of scientific and technological industries, decreasing the importance of traditional industrial sectors. Rapid economic growth and increasing interdependence, however, called for a global approach to economic problems, in the solution of which the United Nations should play a major role.

73. Kazakstan welcomed international cooperation in the integration of countries with transition economies into the world economy. The economy of Kazakstan was beginning to emerge from the worst crises of the transition period. The Government was pursuing sound economic reform policies in order to achieve macroeconomic stabilization, and hoped that Kazakstan would soon be joining the World Trade Organization. It strongly supported the measures taken to facilitate transit for the landlocked States of central Asia.

74. A large portion of the territory of Kazakstan could be termed an ecological disaster area, and some problems, such as the drying up of the Aral Sea, could not be dealt with by Kazakstan alone. His delegation hoped that the United Nations and its specialized agencies would take a more active role in that area.

75. Mr. CASSAR (Malta) said that his Government's efforts towards economic growth and consolidation of social policies had been inspired by innovative continuity. In the past few years, Malta had witnessed a tremendous expansion of enterprise and entrepreneurship which had been coupled with diminished direct Government intervention through devolution and decentralization. His Government had initiated a process of transforming the welfare state into a welfare society which aimed at integrating social services by relating them as closely as possible to the needs of individual persons rather than those of broad anonymous categories. Education was one of his Government's top priorities, and through bilateral and multilateral cooperative programmes, Malta had contributed to the investment in human resources by providing students, particularly from the Mediterranean and Commonwealth countries, the opportunity to study in its institutions of higher learning.

76. Poverty continued to threaten social cohesion in the world. The celebration during the current year of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty testified to the international community's awareness of that fact, and to its recognition that multilateral assistance and bilateral assistance could make a difference. In that regard, the role of non-governmental organizations could not be underestimated, as they often invested in grass-roots action through the provision of educational, health and community services that had an impact on the human and natural environment. The eradication of poverty required sustained cooperation at the regional and international level. The World Food Summit scheduled to be held in Rome should effectively contribute towards that end.

77. The emphasis currently being placed on sustainable development resulted from the realization that there was an intrinsic link between man and his environment, and that development should therefore be viewed as both dependent on and stemming from the natural environment. The special session of the General Assembly to review Agenda 21 was of particular relevance in that regard, as was the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing Countries.

78. Mr. de SILVA (Sri Lanka) said because of his Government's great concern about economic and social development, it believed that appropriate strategies must be formulated by the international community to facilitate the improvement of living conditions for all mankind. In that connection, an agenda for development was of crucial importance as it underpinned the central role of the United Nations in the field of economic cooperation and development, which were crucial to the advancement and stability of developing countries. The Second Committee should therefore redouble its efforts to conclude its work on that document.

79. Developing countries required strong political commitments together with matching policies to be able to realize their development objectives. However, national efforts must be complemented by enhanced cooperation with developed countries and international organizations and other specialized agencies. Developed countries must realize, in that regard, that their assistance to developing countries would benefit them as well. Efforts to expand South-South cooperation must continue since unity, cohesion and coordination among all nations had become more important than ever before.

80. Although the world economy had improved and many developing countries were doing well, the vast majority of humankind still languished in poverty.

81. Whereas participants in the development debate tended to view integration into a single global economic grid as the sole option open to developing countries, little attention had been given to the specific problems of individual developing countries, including the political and social pressures facing their Governments. In fact, globalization had not always proved to be a panacea for developing countries and many had suffered rather than benefiting, for interdependence had made their fragile economies highly vulnerable to changes in the world economy. Accordingly, the immediate task for national and international policy was to secure an enhanced role in world trade for developing countries through the expansion and diversification of developing

country export products and markets. A decisive effort to expand and improve international economic cooperation through a constructive dialogue based on mutual economic interests and mutual benefits was urgently needed.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.